

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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CHRISTIANS CALL ON COUNTRYMEN TO PROTECT FREEDOM OF THOUGHT

Tuesday, February 11, is Kenkoku Kinenbi, a national holiday established in 1967 (actually reinstated under a new name after a 21 year break) by the government to commemorate the founding of Japan according to mythology. For a small but very determined, group, the celebration will focus on Protecting Freedom of Thought and Belief in a time when the guarantees of the post-war Constitution seem threatened.

Rallies will be sponsored throughout the country by the Liaison Committee for the Yasukuni Shrine Problem. Speakers will emphasize the significance of freedom, pointing out threats they see, particularly in a proposed Diet bill to nationalize Yasukuni Shrine, a Shinto shrine for the war dead.

In Tokyo, the rally will be held at Kyoritsu Hall, Hitotsubashi, Kanda, from 2:00 to 5:00. Speakers will be Shinichi Takahashi, critic, and Mitsuo Miyata, professor, Tohoku University. A proposed statement will be presented for approval, and a march conducted through the area.

Cooperating in the Liaison Committee are representatives from many groups, including Christian churches and Christian organizations, among which are the YMCA, WCTU, and peace and youth agencies.

In a month-long campaign that began January 11 the Liaison Committee stepped up pamphlet distribution, discussion meetings, and calls on Diet members in an effort to alert the public to the issues involved. A note of urgency was added by Prime Minister Sato's announcement, when he visited Ise Shrine on New Year's, that the Yasukuni bill would be presented to the current session of the Diet at an early date.

CATECHETICS AND CHRISTIAN NURTURE

A number of denominational backgrounds will be represented at the 13th Annual Reformed Theological Conference, to be held, in English, Feb. 11-12, at the Osaka Christian Center.

Chairman John Hesselink explains that the theme, "Catechetics and Christian Nurture," was chosen both because of its relevance to Christian work in Japan in the effective instruction and growth of church members; and because of new developments in this field, particularly the new Dutch Roman Catholic catechism.

For information and reservations, Rev. Clement Walbert, 20-13 Ishibashi, 4-chome, Ikeda-shi, Osaka-fu, 563, should be contacted as soon as possible.

"CHRIST, OUR PEACE!"

"Christ, Our Peace," was lifted up as the theme for the third quadrennial Christian Peace Conference held January 14 and 15, with 145 participants from all over Japan in attendance.

In the opening session, held the evening of the 14th at Yamate Church in Tokyo, Rev. Sanai Hashimoto, vice chairman, Hokkaido Christian Peace Association, offered an evaluation of the Christian peace movement. United Church of Christ General Secretary Toru Takakura spoke on "Renewal of the Church and Social Responsibility." Kyozo Mori, Asahi Shimbun journalist, discussed "Japan in Asia."

The following day, small group discussions, which met at International Christian University, Mitaka, concentrated on these themes:

The Renewal of the Church

The Problem of Military Bases and the Provisions of the Security Treaty

Democracy and the Yasukuni Shrine Problem

Japan and Asia

Reforming Present Systems

Solidarity Among the Peace Movements

The Conference issued a statement which, reflecting the findings of the smaller groups, called for perfect adherence to the Peace Constitution, including the guarantee of religious freedom; termination of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty; opposition to the introduction of nuclear arms into Japan; and the strengthening of bonds with other peace groups.

TASAKA REPORTS IMPRESSIONS OF RUSSIA

"We were pleasantly surprised to discover the life and vitality of the church in Russia today," Rev. Atsumi Tasaka told the NCC executive committee in his January 17 report on the December visit to Russia of a Japanese delegation.

The team of six visited Moscow, Leningrad and Latvia from December 5-17, at the invitation of the Russian Orthodox Church. Mr. Tasaka said the impression that, since the Russian Revolution fifty years ago, the Russian Orthodox Churches have become museum pieces is false and that most of the churches were full of life and playing an important part in the lives of the people.

"We also witnessed evidence of the understanding by which the government respects the freedom of the church, and the church does not interfere in the government," he said.

According to Mr. Tasaka, the group was permitted to see anything it wished and to get an idea of the life and culture of the people and cities as well as of the Russian Orthodox churches. The team attended a Baptist Church in Moscow,

where, in sub-zero weather, 2,200 people attended one of three weekly meetings, and visited a Lutheran Church in Latvia. Mr. Tasaka emphasized the ecumenical spirit of the Russian Orthodox Church, especially its participation in the World Council of Churches.

In response to an inquiry from the Russian Orthodox Church, the executive committee voted to extend an invitation to a Russian delegation to visit Japanese churches in the autumn of 1969.

SYMBOL AND SUBSTANCE OF ECUMENICITY

Gotemba, a little town that lies on the lower skirts of Mount Fuji, is known to church leaders of many denominations and of many countries as the site of Tozanso, YMCA conference center that has hosted many ecumenical conferences.

Gotemba was the site of a "big" ecumenical venture on Saturday night, December 21, when the Catholic Church, two Protestant churches, and Tozanso sponsored a joint Christmas concert for the people of the town. Some fourteen hundred people gathered in the auditorium of the Gotemba Junior High School to hear the women's chorus led by Mr. Yoichiro Miyake. The three churches are not large, but they had reason to rejoice in the success of their first joint action.

NEW THOROUGHFARES FOR MISSION TRAFFIC?

Sixty Christian leaders representing, on one side, Japanese churches, Christian schools and social work institutions and, on the other, North American mission boards, will study "The Christian Confrontation with Present Society" and what it demands of Christians in Japan and North America, at a 3-day consultation, Feb. 11-14.

The Consultation is sponsored by the Council of Cooperation, a liaison body set up twenty-five years ago to coordinate the work of eight North American mission boards in relation to the programs of The United Church of Christ in Japan, schools in the IBC-related Schools Council, and institutions in the Christian Social Work League. Much of the Consultation will focus on how to provide the new wineskins necessary to hold the new wine of social urgency, functional specialization, ecumenicity and mutual responsibility.

Gathering first in Tokyo at the Shinagawa Community Center, consultation members will see first-hand one church's confrontation with the problems of its neighborhood. Tuesday evening, Professor Junichi Kyogoku, Tokyo University, well-known commentator on current affairs, will speak. The following day the conference will move to Tozanso for a series of reports, discussions and look-ahead sessions. Wednesday evening Dr. Everett Kleinjans, Chancellor of the East-West Center in Hawaii, will speak.

THE SIGN OF THE FISH

A layman, proprietor of a Tsukiji fish market in Tokyo, beamed at finding one of his customers attending the Joint Catholic-Protestant Prayer Service January 19. He had often waited on a Catholic sister who came to the store, but they had never discussed their common commitment, symbolized in the early days of the Christian church by "the Fish." They met one another unexpectedly, among the 200 Catholic and Protestant lay and clergy at Ginza Church.

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This week, primarily as a service to overseas readers, we begin the inclusion of a quick review of recent headline-making events from many surfaces of Japanese life. Compiling the feature will be Ichiji Yokota, Kirisutokyo Tsushin ("The Christian News Service"), Tokyo.

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8,500 RIOT POLICE "LIBERATED" TOKYO UNIVERSITY CAMPUS after a 35-hour ordeal which resulted in the arrest of some 700 students, identified with sub-groups within three major groupings: All-campus Joint Struggle Committee (anti-Japan Community Party); Minsei (pro-Japan Communist Party); and non-aligned--coming both from Todai and from other campuses.

Police were called in after violence, the seizure of buildings, and the disruption of classes made "education" impossible. A display of Mao's picture and shouts of "Mao Tse-tung Banzai" indicated that, among variously-motivated persons, there is a revolutionary element that aims at breaking the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, demanding reversion of Okinawa, and ridding Japan of American bases.

Following the return of the campus to the administration, the head of the Ministry of Education announced cancellation of Todai entrance exams, a move that Todai administrators, in turn, labeled an invasion of the autonomy of the university.

At Christian universities, while some groupings are like those on other campuses the central thrust frequently comes from Christian students and seminary students. Aoyama Gakuin regained possession of Building No. 8 by agreeing to the radical students demands. But nowhere are the issues fully settled.

THE NUCLEAR-POWERED SUBMARINE PLUNGER VISITED YOKOSUKA January 13-16, nine months after the discovery of increased radio activity in Sasebo harbor, coincident with a submarine call, set off angry demonstrations. At Yokosuka, while some 7,500 persons demonstrated (from the Japan Socialist and Japan Communist Parties), scientists and technicians kept close tab on the radio activity count. The Plunger left January 16, without any serious incident.

A 1969 GOVERNMENT BUDGET UP 15% FROM 1968 HAS BEEN PREPARED by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party. The amount marked for loans and investments is up 14%. In spite of an expected "natural increase" in receipts of ¥1200 billion (\$3 billion), the personal income tax is being reduced only ¥150 billion (\$417 million). With national railroad fares and telephone rates rising, it is feared the new budget will drive prices up. Debate on the budget in the Diet will be watched carefully.

THE MERGER OF TWO OF THE "BIG SIX" IN BANKING WAS CALLED OFF when directors of the smaller bank, The Daiichi, objected to being "swallowed up" by the much larger Mitsubishi. The decision reversed the direction indicated in an announcement of the two bank presidents at the end of 1968, who said they were looking forward to merger.

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